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zoom

in on america

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ART SNAPSHOTS



The evaporation of the borders between nations, at least in the field of art, mirrors the disappearance of all kinds of other boundaries as well.

Hardly anyone worries about the unique characteristics of painting and sculpture any more. Just as artists hopscotch around the globe, they vault effortlessly across media, producing work that simultaneously incorporates not only traditional materials but also digital technology, theatrical installation, photography, performance, music, film, and video. - Eleanor Heartney, art critic

On the left: "Fele's For Sale" by Charles Searles at the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in the Roxbury neighborhood in Boston. (©AP/WWP/Chitose Suzuki).

Charles Searles is not only a painter and a sculptor but also a percussionist.

Some texts on this and subsequent pages have been adapted from the Electronic Journal: The Arts in America: New Directions to be found at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0403/ijse/ijse0403.htm>

In This Issue: Architecture & Design, Movies, Sounds, Quiz, Win a Book!

This is the National Gallery of Art, East Wing in Washington, D.C., designed by I.M. Pei. Did you know that the famous and controversial glass construction in front of the Louvre Museum in Paris - Pyramide du Louvre - was the idea of an American?

Photo: Ezra Stoller/ESTO



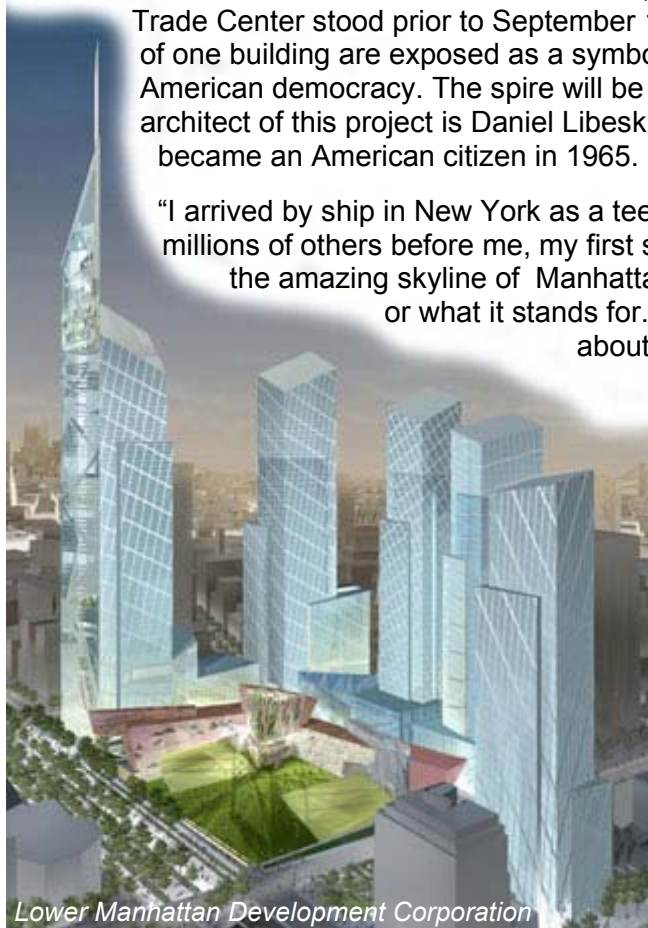
It was also designed by I.M. Pei, who moved to the United States from his native China to study architecture at the age of 17.

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Pei was awarded the 2003 National Design Award for Lifetime Achievement. The National Design Awards have been awarded since 2000 by the Smithsonian Institution's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, the only museum in the United States devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design.

Memory Foundations is the name of the design for a complex of new buildings to be constructed on the Ground Zero site in New York, where the twin towers of World Trade Center stood prior to September 11, 2001. Portions of the foundation of one building are exposed as a symbol of the strength and endurance of American democracy. The spire will be 1,776 feet (540 meters) tall. The architect of this project is Daniel Libeskind, born in Poland in 1946, who became an American citizen in 1965.

"I arrived by ship in New York as a teenager, an immigrant, and like millions of others before me, my first sight was the Statue of Liberty and the amazing skyline of Manhattan. I have never forgotten that sight or what it stands for. This is what this project is all about," says Daniel Libeskind.



Lower Manhattan Development Corporation

It's hard to generalize about the arts in a country housing some **1,200** symphony orchestras, **117** professional opera companies, more than **400** dance companies, and **425** nonprofit professional theaters.

In the USA there is no central ministry of culture that sets national policy for the arts. Two endowments - the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities - provide support for individual artists and scholars as well as institutions.

Private donations have always provided the major support for American culture. Private spending for the arts in the USA for the year 2002 has been calculated at roughly **\$12.1 billion**.

"The American system of arts support is complex, decentralized, diverse, and dynamic. It combines federal, state, and local government support with private subvention from individuals, corporations, and foundations as well as (...) box office receipts," says Dana Gioia, a poet and chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

"(...) If the American arts system is remarkably complex, decentralized, and dynamic, it is also uniquely effective - producing a cultural landscape of enormous size and unmatched diversity," adds Gioia.

■ Design on the Web

Design Addict

<http://www.designaddict.com/>

100 Years of Design

<http://new.idsa.org/webmodules/articles/anmviewer.asp?a=51&z=28>

Design Engine

<http://www.design-engine.com/>

■ Movies

For 10 days each January, the small winter sports community of Park City, Utah, is transformed into one of the most vibrant spots on the landscape of American movies. The Sundance Film Festival showcases the phenomenon of independent filmmaking in the United States — that is, films made by independent producers outside the Hollywood studio system. Below is an excerpt from a conversation with Geoffrey Gilmore, responsible for film selection and the organization of the annual Sundance event.

Q: From your point of view, what are the most exciting developments in American movies today?

A: There is a whole new generation of directors who are doing movies on both sides of the line — independent, lowbudget productions and major studio films. The idea that these two sectors would never meet was talked about at the beginning of the 1990s, but you can't say that anymore, not with directors like Todd Haynes (*Far From Heaven*) or Alexander Payne (*About Schmidt*) on the scene.(...)

The independent sector represents less than 10 percent of the total box office. But it has infused Hollywood with remarkable talent — leading actors like Renée Zellweger, Julianne Moore, Adrien Brody, and Nicole Kidman, and directors like Haynes, Steven Soderbergh, Quentin Tarantino, and Gus Van Sant. Now these directors can make films whenever and wherever they want — inside and outside the major studio system.

One of the premier film festivals in the world, the Sundance Film Festival is a showcase for the best and latest work of independent American and international filmmakers.

A diverse group of over 36,000 participants attends the Festival each year, including directors, actors, film industry executives, and film lovers.

The Festival is a program of the Sundance Institute, founded by Robert Redford in 1981 and dedicated to the development of artists of independent vision and the exhibition of their new works.

<http://www.sundance.org/>

■ Sounds

Pop music plays a major role in the American entertainment industry, with particular help these days from female vocalists who dominate the radio, such as Sheryl Crow (shades of the “California rock” style of the old band The Eagles) and Lucinda Williams (a fusion of blues, country, and rock).

Older styles of pop continue to be a strong part of the American musical landscape. Sounds from even earlier in rock history are never far away; the group Sugar Ray incorporates so many elements from old rock styles that the result is both nostalgic and refreshing.

Newcomer Norah Jones, who in 2003 received all five Grammy Awards she was nominated for, is an intimate singer who proves the vitality of the softer rock beat and meaningful lyrics.

The pop music field is still spreading its stylistic influences around a world that has never lost its appetite for the latest American sounds and stars.



Above: Singer Bootsy Collins arrives with members of Parliament Funkadelic at the 46th Annual Grammy Awards, Feb. 8, 2004, in Los Angeles. (©AP/WWP/Mark J. Terrill)

The GRAMMY Awards, which cover 105 categories as diverse as pop, rock, jazz, blues, rap, classical and folk, celebrate the best in the recording arts.

The 2004 Grammy Awards ceremony featured 19 musical performances, including those by Prince and Beyoncé, OutKast, Black Eyed Peas, Justin Timberlake, the Foo Fighters and jazz legend Chick Corea.

Taken together, as CBS President Leslie Moonves said, "It all adds up to one exciting event: the music industry's biggest showcase."

<http://www.grammy.com/>

Activity Page

Win a Book!

To take part in a drawing for one of three English-language books find the answer to the following question:

Which American artist is a painter, a sculptor and a percussionist?

Send your answer to:
zoom@usinfo.pl

Give your name, address, and age. The deadline is August 30.

Good Luck!

The winners from the previous issue will soon receive their prizes by mail.

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Warsaw
Ambasada USA
ul. Piękna 14, 00-540
Warszawa
airc_warsaw@state.gov

Krakow
Konsulat Generalny USA
ul. Stolarska 9, 31-043
Krakow
KrakowAIRC@state.gov

Who Said That?

Match the quote with its author.

A doctor can bury his mistakes but an architect can only advise his clients to plant vines.

Blues is easy to play, but hard to feel.

My instinct about painting says, 'If you don't think about it, it's right.' As soon as you have to decide and choose, it's wrong. And the more you decide about, the more wrong it gets.

If you have to have a job in this world, a high-priced movie star is a pretty good gig.

Tom Hanks
Jimi Hendrix
Frank Lloyd Wright
Alfred Hitchcock
Andy Warhol

For me, the cinema is not a slice of life, but a piece of cake.

Find tons more quotes at: www.bartleby.com

Artists' Tools

Which art disciplines are these used in?

metronome - *music*
glaze -
easel -
mouthpiece -
tap shoes -
canvas -
prop -
clay -
clapboard -
tutu -

Glossary

Explanation of 10 difficult words in this issue:

box office receipts - income from ticket sales
endurance - the ability to withstand hardship
evaporation - disappearance
fusion - joining of diverse elements
to hopscotch - to move as if by jumping
to incorporate - to unite, blend, combine
to infuse - to introduce
a showcase - a medium for exhibiting something in an attractive aspect
subvention - financial support from the government
to vault - to do something as if by a jump

Some Art Critics Can Make Your Blood Boil

Use the following idioms in the sentences below. Sometimes changing the form of the verb is necessary.

a flash in the pan	to bomb
a bone of contention	a bitter pill to swallow
to beat around the bush	

The highly unfavorable review from the usually laudatory critic was for the sculptor.

An artist to an art critic: "Stop! Just tell me what you think!"

In a theater play review: "The new play by Robert Merredith closed on the first night. It"

The two editors of our local newspaper always have different opinions on the artistic life in our little community. The subject is a between them.

"I know some media have called him the best new film director in the country, but I think he's just"